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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

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INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE MOBILIZATION OF FINANCIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES TO INCREASE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION IN AFRICA

Executive Summary

* E/ECA/TPCW.8/1.
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1. The major concern of this document is to make proposals in respect of an international year devoted to the mobilization of financial and technological resources for food and agriculture in Africa which might be designated in 1991 in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/198 of 20 December 1983.

2. These proposals, which fundamentally reflect Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) and the outcome of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the African economic crisis, note that though Africa has immense agricultural potential, it has gradually lost its capacity to feed its growing population. This inability stems from neglect of African agriculture and the commulative inadequacies of policies and institutions over the past two decades. The extractive, urban-biased policies of many African States in the post-colonial era have denied agriculture its priority as the motive force for development. The interplay between this misunderstood role of agriculture and other deep-seated predisposing factors - political, social, technical, economic - coupled with natural disasters, have compounded the situation, spawning the present agrarian crisis with concomitant devastating famine, poverty and a deepening food import dependency.

3. One critical cause of this chronic agrarian crisis is the existing technology gap in the African food and agriculture sector. While African Governments have retained past emphasis on agricultural research - mostly on export crops, - there is acute underinvestment in basic and adaptive research and technology suited to essential staple food crop and livestock production. Agricultural development has been tilted more towards the politically powerful resource-rich farmers and high potential regions, than to small poorer farmers - and particularly women and depressed areas.

4. In elaborating the proposals, the document advocates for the sustainability of food and agricultural production systems aimed at achieving African agricultural revival, and which will avert possible economic and political disasters on the continent. This calls for a critical review - a rethinking and a reorientation of policies and strategies - involving depackaging of African and other experiences. Thus, rather than become preoccupied mostly with the transfer of alien technologies, as now pertains, the challenge lies in a massive and complex task of reorientation, greatly strengthening Africa's agricultural research and production systems - and, above all, the development of new and unexplored technologies.

5. It is noted that it will be difficult and costly to bring about this postulated transition in African agricultural recovery for sustained growth and development. However, since the long-term pay-offs far outweigh the cost of waiting or inaction and of potential economic and political catastrophies, this is the time to begin.

6. Therefore, the inescapable conclusion is that African agriculture requires substantially greater financial and technological development support than hitherto from domestic and external sources if this sector is to make the urgent sustained recovery from the present crisis. In fact, the food and agricultural